

Volunteers To Serve As Police 'Eyes And Ears'

By Pat Reavy

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Sandy police will be getting a helping hand beginning this week from a special group of volunteers.

Starting tonight, the department will introduce its new Volunteers in Police Service Mobile Watch Program, or VIPS. Five people, mainly senior citizens, who have been trained by the department, will help regular officers keep a watch on areas that may be experiencing higher crime or where there seems to be an abundance of speeders.

"They'll be our eyes and ears of the community," said Sandy Police Sgt. Victor Quezada.

The volunteers will be given a marked car identifying them as the VIPS team as well as a police radio. However, Quezada emphasized they will not have police powers.

"They will not be involved in police work," he said. The group will, however, in some cases use a radar gun to document speed in some areas. If they record a large amount of speeders in one area, officers will beef up patrols, Quezada said.

The VIPS people may also be asked to keep an eye on areas where recent crime has been reported, such as car burglaries or drug dealing. At no time will the group be put in a dangerous situation or asked to make contact with a suspect, he said.

"They are not to engage," Quezada said. "They have been trained through the Citizen's Academy and other specialized training so they have a little knowledge on how the police operate."

The idea for the program actually came from seeing it work in other cities. "It's a program that's proven to work," Quezada said.

The first VIPS shift will begin at 8:30 p.m. Friday tonight. Right now, there are just five volunteers. Quezada said when the program is up and running at full capacity there will be 16 volunteers. "We're already among the safest cities in the nation, but we want to be even better," he said.

For more information on how you can become involved in the Sandy City VIPS program, contact:

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